

13 August 2023 Sunday



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BI looks into involvement of foreigners in Manila Bay reclamation activities

By JUN RAMIREZ

The Bureau of Immigration (BI) has initiated an examination of the crew on board dredging vessels involved in reclamation activities at the Manila Bay.

BI Commissioner Norman Tansingco said the scrutiny aims to verify the adherence of foreign individuals engaged in the project to immigration regulations.

The assessment, he said, is being carried out by the agency's bay service division, in collaboration with the Philippine Coast Guard.

In response to concerns raised by local governments along the coastal areas about flooding caused by ongoing reclamation projects, President

Ferdinand Marcos, Jr. has temporarily halted reclamation activities in Manila Bay.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has also committed to conducting an evaluation of the project's impact on the community, ensuring that the reclamation is conducted in compliance with the law.

"It's not just a matter of the national government's concern for the project; we're also taking responsibility by inspecting foreign individuals on these vessels to confirm their adherence to immigration regulations," Tansingco said.

He clarified that foreign nationals engaged in commercial activities within the Philippines are obligated

to obtain a valid work visa or permit.

Tansingco mentioned that the combined inspection team successfully boarded and examined three vessels: MV Mao Hua, which carried 14 Chinese nationals and 8 Filipino crew members; MV Liang Long, with 17 Chinese nationals and 2 Filipino crew members; and MV Jun Hai 5, hosting 28 Chinese crew members.

He assured that these inspections will continue over the next few days to ensure complete compliance with immigration laws.

"We will present a comprehensive report of our findings to the Secretary of Justice, and any foreign individual found working without proper documentation will face penalties," he added.



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BI INSPECTS DREDGING SHIPS, CHECKS RECLAMATION WORKERS

By Vito Barcelo

THE Bureau of Immigration (BI) has initiated an inspection of dredging vessels located in reclamation sites in Pasay City to check the status of foreigners working on the project.

The environment group Oceana meanwhile urged the government to end reclamation activities in Manila Bay and not just suspend it, citing long-term damage to the environment. The group also said, "it would be a lot of help to everyone if all these projects were stopped." The Philippine Reclamation Authority (PRA) said only three ongoing projects are affected by the suspension of all 22 reclamation projects in Manila Bay.

According to the PRA, maps provided by the Department of Environ-

ment and Natural Resources show the three ongoing reclamation projects are Harbour City in Pasay, with 265 hectares of land allocated for institutions, condominiums, and hotels; a 390-hectare joint venture between the city and SM Prime Holdings; and the 318-hectare Manila Waterfront City project near the United States Embassy.

The PRA said most of the reclamation projects are still under "various stages of compliance," adding that the agency received the presidential directive suspending

the reclamation projects.

The PRA said it has served suspension notices to the local governments of Metro Manila cities of Navotas, Manila, Pasay, Parañaque, Las Piñas; as well as Bacoor City, and Cavite province.

The BI inspection meanwhile was done with the Philippine Coast Guard and was conducted by officers of the BI's Bay Service Section and Intelligence Division.

BI Commissioner Norman Tansingco earlier ordered BI personnel to inspect the said vessels, following concerns on their activities in the area.

President Ferdinand Marcos, Jr. earlier ordered the suspension of reclamation activities in Manila Bay. The Department of Environment and Natural Resource (DENR) likewise pledged to conduct community im-

pact assessment to ensure that the reclamation will be implemented within the bounds of the law.

The inspection, said Tansingco, will be conducted to ensure that foreign nationals involved in the project are compliant with immigration laws.

He stated that foreign nationals that conduct commercial activities in the Philippines are required to secure a work visa or permit.

Tansingco shared that as of Friday, the composite team were able to board and inspect three vessels namely MV Mao Hua with 14 Chinese nationals and 8 Filipino crew, MV Liang Longj with 17 Chinese nationals and 2 Filipino crew, and MV Jun Hai 5, with 28 Chinese crew.

He stated that the inspections will continue in the next few days to ensure full compliance with immigration laws.



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BI to check work visas of Chinese reclamation crews

By GHIO ONG

Chinese nationals working on Manila Bay reclamation projects recently suspended by the government will be checked for work visas or permits, the Bureau of Immigration (BI) declared.

On Friday, personnel from the BI's bay service section and

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intelligence division, as well as those from the Philippine Coast Guard, inspected three dredging vessels in Manila Bay near the reclamation area in Pasay City.

Upon inspection, they found Chinese nationals carried by the following vessels: *M/V Mao Hua* with 14; *M/V Liang Long* with 17 and *M/V Jun Hai* with 28.

Eight Filipino crew members were also onboard *Mao Hua* while *Liang Long* carried two Filipino crew members.

The Chinese nationals should be compliant with the Philippines' immigration laws, according to BI Commissioner Norman Tansingco.

While the BI has not reported its

findings from last Friday's inspection, he said the inspections would continue in the next few days to ensure full compliance with immigration laws.

"We will be submitting a comprehensive report of our findings to the Secretary of Justice and will be penalizing any foreign national found to be working without proper documentation," he stated in his statement yesterday.

The BI initiated the inspection after President Marcos suspended all reclamation activities in Manila Bay.

"Apart from the national government being concerned with the project, we also want to do our share by inspecting foreigners on board said vessels to confirm their compliance with immigration laws," said Tansingco.



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SMC: Airport project involves no reclamation work

AMID some doubts, the San Miguel Corp. (SMC) on Friday clarified that the New Manila International Airport (NMIA) project in the province of Bulacan does not include reclamation activities.

Projected to be the Philippines' largest airport, the NMIA is being constructed in coastal Bulacan areas.

"The airport project does not involve reclamation. The project site has existing, valid land titles indicating its original status as land," SMC President and Chief Executive Officer Ramon Ang said in a statement on Friday.

"Due to natural processes over time, this land had become prone to regular inundation. Instead of

creating new land, we are redeveloping it to its former state, ensuring its productive and sustainable use for the future," Ang added.

Also, he emphasized the need to "clarify the nature of its airport project amid recent discussions surrounding Manila Bay reclamation projects."

SMC said the NMIA, which will consist of four runways, is not being built on reclaimed land but on low-lying areas "vulnerable to heavy flooding and were converted to commercial fishponds."

"Surrounded by the Meycauayan, Taliptip and Maycapiz rivers, the low-lying land has been converted into fishponds that have contributed to flooding in

nearby towns as the flow of the rivers into the Manila Bay has been impeded and since the rivers themselves have become shallow due to siltation and pollution," SMC pointed out.

According to Ang, the land redevelopment is being done with "international experts and partners" — among them a global services expert — to make the project compliant with "international standards in environmental and social impact mitigation."

Included in the NMIA development, the SMC will conduct a massive river cleanup and rehabilitation effort, covering rivers across the province of Bulacan, where the airport is located, including

the Marilao-Meycauayan-Obando river systems.

Cleanup and rehabilitation efforts are aimed at addressing the flooding problems in the province, which were recently experienced due to Typhoon "Egay's" heavy rains.

"The NMIA will not only provide a world-class facility, it will also serve as a catalyst for local and national economic growth, opening doors to countless job opportunities and paving the way for a future-ready Philippines that is competitive on the global stage. [This will] also uplift the lives of Filipinos through "progress with responsibility," Ang said.

ARIC JOHN SY CUA



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PhilSA shares resources to boost capabilities of local industries

By EDWIN P. GALVEZ

THE Philippines may not have a robust space industry yet, but the Philippine Space Agency (PhilSA) will continue to help boost the capabilities of the country's local industries by sharing its data and knowledge resources.

PhilSA director general Joel Joseph S. Marciano Jr. told the BUSINESSMIRROR that "space-adjacent companies," specifically those involved in the semiconductors, electronics, machining and manufacturing industries, can benefit from the agency's space resources.

"What we have is know-how. More importantly, what our engineers have is love of country. So you want to be able to share this know-how," Marciano said at the sidelines of the opening program of the first Philippine Space Week celebration on August 8 in Quezon City.

The celebration coincided with the fourth anniversary of the signing of Republic Act 11363, or the Philippine Space Act that created the agency.

According to Marciano, PhilSA can help companies open new markets for their products if they have components that "can be used with more robustness to work in space."

"Also, quite important [is creating] a new range of high-value capabilities for their engineers," he said.

He acknowledged the capability of PhilSA personnel to assist these companies, having helped build the country's satellites or after taking graduate studies and trainings abroad.

"[These] things you learn while doing your master's degree or PhD, building Diwata-1, Diwata-2, or Mayain Japanese universities. Now you're back in the country working for PhilSA, the university or DOST [Department of Science and Technology], you pay it forward. You look at local companies here and tell them if you're building that for Earth. If you do this test, then maybe it can work in space. These are [our] resources," he explained.

While the Philippines is ready to monetize its space data, Marciano emphasized the need to open up these data first to build capacity, and part of this "heavy lifting" is appreciation for these capabilities and make them more accessible.

Fostering international cooperation

MORE than monetization, Marciano explained to BUSINESSMIRROR

PhilSA's role in actively contributing to international cooperation and goodwill through the use of its satellites.

"Other countries come to our aid when we have typhoons and disasters because they have satellites flying over and taking pictures. [They] give [their data] to us, and we process and value-add. But since we also operate a satellite, we can come to [their] aid when they need it," he said.

These are among the key mandates of PhilSA, which also includes national security and development, hazard management and climate studies, space research and development, and space education and awareness.

Proclamation 302 signed by President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. last July 25 declared August 8 to 14 every year as Philippine Space Week.

In his opening message at the event, Marciano explained that the declaration "recognizes the vital role that space science, technology and its applications play in the lives of Filipinos."

These include the use of satellites and their by-products and services and the advancement of "humankind's collective scientific knowledge and understanding."

Value creation from space resources

"WE propose #YamangKalawakan—which literally means space resources or space wealth—to take on a bigger, more figurative and encompassing meaning," Marciano said as he explained the celebration's theme.

He said "#YamangKalawakan tungo sa maunlad na kinabukasan" reflects PhilSA's mission of value creation, which aims to "build and sustain a robust space ecosystem that adds and creates value in space for and from Filipinos, and for the world."

"To guide us and to frame this mission of creating value, we look at value chains for strategy guidance. A crucial part of this chain are the end-users. That is, those to whom we push, or, more importantly, those who pull on, the space-based capabilities that we



PHILSA Director General Joel Joseph S. Marciano Jr. (FOURTH from left) speaks at the news conference during the launching program of the first Philippine Space Week celebration in Quezon City. He is joined by (from left) DOST-ASTI's Alvin E. Retamar, LBP SVP Elcid C. Pangilinan, DBM Undersecretary Maria Francesca M. del Rosario, MinDA Secretary Maria Belen S. Acosta, DA-BFAR Assistant Director Isidro Velayo Jr., PhilSA Deputy DG Gay Jane P. Perez and PhilSA Director Ariel C. Blanco. PHILSA PHOTO

strive to build," he said.

"Without the end-users or without the utilization," he explained, "socio-economic benefit from space science technology and applications cannot possibly be had."

Agreements with five agencies

DURING the event, PhilSA signed agreements with five government institutions to deepen space data acquisition and the use of space science and technology (S&T) applications for value creation.

These agencies include the Department of Budget and Management (DBM), Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP), the Department of Science and Technology-Advanced Science and Technology Institute (DOST-ASTI), Mindanao Development Authority (MinDA), the Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (DA-BFAR).

DBM Undersecretary and Chief Information Officer Maria Francesca M. del Rosario signed the agreement with PhilSA to implement the "Digital Information for Monitoring and Evaluation" project.

The initiative will improve monitoring of government property or -funded infrastructure projects using data and images from satellites processed and made available by PhilSA, reduce costly on-ground efforts, such as field-based validation activities and ensure the proper use and expenditure of public funds.

DOST-ASTI Chief Science Research Specialist Alvin Retamar and LBP Senior Vice President Elcid Pangilinan signed the agreement for S&T research collaboration on the use of space data and analytics for financial applications.

MinDA Secretary Ma. Belen

S. Acosta signed a collaboration agreement on the use of space assets to promote the socio-economic development in Mindanao.

The collaboration, called PhilSA Integrated Network for Space-enabled Actions towards Sustainability (Pinas) Mindanao, highlights the increasing relevance of geospatial data in local government policy-making, planning and monitoring.

Pinas Mindanao seeks to develop projects in different local government units in Mindanao to advance peace and development, promote best practices in governance and empower communities towards socio-economic inclusion.

DA-BFAR assistant director Isidro Velayo Jr. and DOST-ASTI's Retamar signed the agreement on the use of space S&T remote sensing, and data science applications to support sustainable fisheries and marine biodiversity conservation.

The collaboration will also utilize space S&T, remote sensing, and data science applications to enhance fisheries management and application.

Tackling air pollution in the country from space, PhilSA signed a Record of Discussion with the Korea International Cooperation Agency on August 2.

This will help strengthen the Philippines' capacity to monitor the air quality and develop plans and policies to address air pollution.

The agreement seeks to build the Pan-Asia Partnership for Geospatial Air Pollution Information Project and the Pandora Asia Network (Paggapi-PAN) in the country.

Paggapi-PAN is a technology-transfer, data-sharing, capacity-building, and international cooperation initiative on air pollution.



Land-filled Manila Bay, vanished rivers of Central Luzon



SUNDAY STORIES

MARLEN V. RONQUILLO

BEFORE his death in a car accident in 1997, Rep. Emigdio Bondoc Jr. of Pampanga's fourth district was making an inventory of the dead or near-dead rivers of Central Luzon and the tributaries that were totally dependent on the major rivers. By this time, the geography of flooding in his province was shifting from the traditional catch basins like Lubao — which literally means "lo bajo," or low place — to coastal towns covered by his district: Macabebe, Masantol and nearby areas. The absorptive capacity of his coastal town for even the briefest of rain dumps was at near breaking point. During the rainy season, his constituencies were always preparing for the worst and the inevitable evacuation orders.

Representative Bondoc, after consulting old Central Luzon maps and talking to experts, estimated that there were roughly 100 Central Luzon rivers and major tributaries that had vanished, and these were rivers and tributaries that were fully functional up to the middle of the 20th century. He was certain about one thing: humans and their rapacity and greed, not natural evolution, killed and wasted most of the rivers and tributaries.

► Ronquillo A5



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Land-filled Manila Bay, vanished rivers of Central Luzon

How many fishpond operators, he asked, simply grabbed and diked the communal rivers, then legalized the river grab? How many human settlers have land-filled riverine areas to carve out new settlements? Born in Macabebe in the third decade of the 20th century, Bondoc still had memories of the years when the Pampanga River was a vast, sprawling communal fishing ground and transport artery for cargo and fish trading. During the rainy season, it served as a depository for floodwaters, which then eased swiftly and seamlessly into the Manila Bay. There were floodings in the low-lying areas of his native town, yes, but the floodwaters soon emptied out into the vast sea through the outflows of the Pampanga River. Before his death, most coastal towns on the province's western side had been blanketed with fishpond dikes, the former grandeur, vastness and depth of the Pampanga River gone.

His data-gathering on the dead and dying rivers and tributaries was a preparation for a planned congressional inquiry on the whys and wherefores of frequent and devastating floods in the Pampanga and Bulacan towns that bordered the Pampanga towns covered by his congressional district.

After the inquiry, he planned to ask the authorities to blast all fishpond dikes found encroaching on rivers and communal fishing grounds.

"I don't care how powerful and well-connected these illegal fishpond owners are," he told me one time during the course of his initial data gathering. "It is time to deal with these bastards." Bondoc belonged to a time when the province of Pampanga was a nurturing ground for principled and fearless political leaders.

Indeed, without political clout and connections, one cannot just grab and dike vast portions of a river, an important part of the fishery and navigational commons, and then get a title for them. The scam may be similar to the process of illegally converting public lands classified as A and D, or alienable and disposable lands, into private property with formal and valid registration papers from the registry of deeds.

It was not a coincidence that the floodwaters of Typhoon "Egay" dealt havoc, destruction and suffering the most to Macabebe, Masantol, Minalin and San Simon, and the nearby areas that lost their capacity to absorb floodwaters and also lost the rivers and tributaries that

facilitated the seamless and easy flow of floodwaters into the Manila Bay.

For several days, a flooded portion of the NLEX in San Simon town, part of the Macabebe-Masantol nexus of low-lying areas, triggered 3 to 5 kilometers of traffic jams on both the southbound and northbound lanes. The flooded portion was less than a hundred meters, but the economic impact the traffic jams wrought on the interconnected Metro Manila-Central Luzon economy was substantial. It also transformed the NLEX into a transport hellscape, which was fully documented and posted on social media platforms by irate motorists.

And according to the senators, Manila Bay itself is an endangered body of water because of senseless and reckless reclamation projects. The senators are scheduled to hold public hearings on the impact of the reckless reclamations on floods in Metro Manila. And how the reckless building in the reclaimed areas has marred the beauty of Manila Bay, especially its world-famous sunset. President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. himself said you can no longer see Manila Bay from the Roxas Boulevard area and ordered a freeze on the reclamation projects.

After the Manila Bay inquiry is

over and done with, the senators can seamlessly segue into probing the massive floods in Pampanga's coastal areas and the vanished rivers and tributaries. History will be on their side should they extend their initial Manila Bay probe into the flooding of Pampanga's coastal areas.

During the Spanish period, the Pampanga River was called the Rio Grande. And the trade route between Manila Bay and the Rio Grande — that covered Malabon and Navotas, coastal Bulacan towns, coastal Pampanga towns, and Orani in Bataan — was an important one and, in today's jargon, a GDP accelerator. It was no wonder that the axis of growth was built on the coastal towns along that vital trade route and plied by the "cascos," the trading ships of yore.

Today, the reckless reclamations and the non-stop "build, build, build" in the reclaimed areas are even blocking the spectacular view of Manila Bay's famous sunset. Today, the Central Luzon rivers that seamlessly moved floodwaters from coastal and inland towns in the region into the Manila Bay in the old days have vanished.

There is one common thread behind the destruction of our irreplaceable commons: greed.



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Do you have a tree planting plan?

I think that I shall never see, a poem as lovely as a tree," goes the famous poem, *Trees*, by Joyce Kilmer.

In today's landscape, with climate change hanging thick in the air, a tree is more than just lovely, it is precious. The value of a tree is well-known and its functions are many: its branches, leaves and trunk provide shade, food ingredients, and material for shelter, while its roots prevent soil erosion to hold back floods and landslides.

Through the years, there had been many tree planting programs initiated by government and private organizations to keep forests populated with trees. The programs continue until today and it is not unusual for private groups to hold tree-planting activities to commemorate special days in their personal or corporate calendars.

Last week, almost unnoticed, the House of Representatives approved a "bill that will require a Tree Planting Plan (TPP) from all applicants of building permits for residential, commercial, industrial, and public building development projects in a bid to help mitigate the effects of climate change and environmental degradation."

Known as House Bill (HB) No. 8569, it will require any person or entity who will construct a structure to have a tree planting plan. The bill also specifies the species to be planted — indigenous tree varieties that can grow well in specific locations. For residential lots, endemic ornamental plants or fruit-bearing trees will be recommended.

"In requiring a Tree Planting Plan to secure building permits, we aim to enhance environmental quality, mitigate the effects of climate change and preserve the environment for present and future generations," House Speaker Martin Romualdez said after the bill was passed with

266 affirmative votes, with no negative vote nor abstention, during plenary session on Aug. 9.

He said that "under the bill, any person, firm, corporation, department, office, bureau, agency or instrumentality of the government intending to construct, alter, repair or convert any building or structure, is required to set aside, and properly maintain in said property, areas adequate for planting and maintaining trees and flora."

Setting aside a piece of property for the trees should not be the only requirement for the TPP. It will also need a person to nurture them until their branches, leaves and trunks will be strong enough to survive the elements. Many tree planting programs in the past did not prosper because of the absence of a caretaker.

This bill which is expected to become a law soon is not the only one dedicated to populate our forests and urban landscapes with trees. A few years ago, a local government unit passed an ordinance requiring applicants for a marriage license to plant a tree. That ordinance was happily followed by couples who found the requirement a significant activity that marked the beginning of their lives together.

There is one more reason why trees are important. In the eighties, the concept of "forest bathing" was introduced in Japan and the health effects of nature, particularly trees, was the subject of scientific studies. The many who have found walks in the forest and time with trees calming and healing know the importance of trees in the lives of humans.

Those of us who are aware of the tree's value in our environment should make it our aim to do more to propagate trees. One, to plant at least one tree a year, perhaps on one's birthday. Two, if you have time, go further: volunteer to be a tree caretaker for your neighborhood.



Marcos asked to stop Batangas reclamation, too

By Delfin T. Mallari Jr.
@dtmallarijrINQ

LUCENA CITY—Environmental advocacy group Protect the Verde Island Passage (Protect VIP) has called on President Marcos to also stop ongoing reclamation projects on the coast of Batangas province for the construction of liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminals and power plants.

“The ongoing reclamation projects in VIP for the construction of fossil gas projects result in turbid waters and make [seagrass], coral reefs and marine fauna vulnerable to stressors,” Fr. Edwin Gariguez, Protect VIP convenor, said in a statement on Friday.

He added: “Putting up these gas terminals and power plants is destructive as the dumping and filling of land disturb the existing coastal habitats in VIP.”

VIP is a 1.14 million-hectare rich marine ecosystem that extends to the coastlines of Batangas, Romblon, Marinduque, Occidental Mindoro and Oriental Mindoro provinces. It has been recognized as the “center of global shorefish biodiversity” due to the high density of valuable marine resources in the area.

Protect VIP also described the marine corridor as the “epicenter” of fossil gas and LNG developments in the country now that eight of 27 proposed new plants and seven of the nine planned LNG terminals in the country will be located in Batangas.

The group, however, did not pinpoint the locations of the ongoing reclamation projects in Batangas.



WORTH DEFENDING Colorful coral formations attest to the uniqueness of Verde Island Passage as an area rich in biodiversity and thus needing protection from unbridled commercial activity and industrial development. The area mainly covers the waters off Tingloy and Mabini towns in Batangas. Photo taken in September 2021. —PHOTO FROM PROTECT VIP

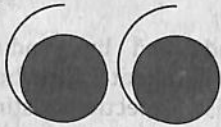




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The group urged Mr. Marcos to also order the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) 'to review the status of gas terminals around the VIP that involve land reclamation, displacement of [fisherfolk] and surrounding communities, and destruction of marine habitats'

'Genuine desire'

Last week, President Marcos announced the suspension of all Manila Bay reclamation projects, except one, which is on hold pending a government review of the extent of the adverse impact on the environment.

Environment Chief Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga later clarified that all 22 reclamation projects in Manila Bay had been suspended.

Protect VIP hoped that the suspension was motivated by the government's "genuine desire" to protect the environment "and not solely because of geopolitical concerns raised by the United States."

To recall, Mr. Marcos made public his decision to suspend the reclamation projects days after the US Embassy expressed concern about a Manila Bay reclamation project being undertaken by a Chinese construction company that was blacklisted by Washington three years ago.

On Aug. 1, US Embassy spokesperson Kanishka Gangopadhyay said the state-owned China Communications Con-

struction Co. "has also been cited by the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank for engaging in fraudulent business practices."

However, if the suspension aims to protect Manila Bay from further destruction and pollution, then the Marcos administration should also stop

the reclamation in the VIP, the group says.

The group urged Mr. Marcos to also order the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) "to review the status of gas terminals around the VIP that involve land reclamation, displacement of [fisherfolk] and surrounding communities, and destruction of marine habitats."

"It is only then that we can be convinced that both the government and DENR are sincere on its new stance on reclamation," Gariguez said.

Ecological hot spots

The group emphasized that Manila Bay and the VIP were both important ecological hot spots and fishing grounds.

"Reclamation and destructive development in these areas will disrupt the marine and coastal ecosystems they house and cause exacerbated vulnerabilities to coastal communities," Gariguez warned.

Protect VIP has been demanding that the government should include VIP on the list of protected areas under the Expanded National Integrated Protected Areas System Act of 2018 to shield it from "destructive human exploitation."

The group warned that by allowing fossil gas facilities to be built and operated, it will expose the VIP to the frequent entry of LNG barges, and inadvertent oil spills or disposal of shipboard liquid waste and bilge water. **INQ**



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PHILIPPINE EAGLE'S IMPORTANT HABITAT

Pasonanca is PHIL's 10th Asean Heritage Park

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA Photos by ACB/PANP

An important life-support system in Zamboanga City, the Pasonanca Natural Park (PaNP), is a legislated protected area (PA) that is teeming with diverse species of rare plants and animals.

It is one of the 94 PAs legislated under Republic Act 7586, as amended by RA 11038, also known as Expanded National Integrated Protected Areas System Act on June 22, 2018.

With a total land area of 17,493.42 hectares, this haven for native trees and birds is shared by seven barangays of Zamboanga City—Bungalo, Tolosa, Salaan, Lamyanga, Pasonanca, Dulian and Balano.

Important water source

The PaNP boasts of a watershed area with over 50 perennial springs and streams at the core zone draining downward to the stretch of the Tumaga River.

Four watersheds likewise exist at the buffer zone areas of PaNP, namely the Manichan, Cullanan, Ayala and Malayat.

The watershed area is the only source of potable water for Zamboanga City. It is managed by the Zamboanga City Water District, that helps protect and conserve the very precious economic resource.

Philippine eagle territory, refugia

An important bird area and key biodiversity area, the PaNP is home to the critically endangered iconic bird of prey, Philippine eagle, the country's national bird and one of the largest of its kind in the world in terms of wing span.

There are around 400 pairs of the Philippine eagle in the wild.

Joson Ibañez, director for Research and Conservation at the Philippine Eagle Foundation, said this could be attributed to the fact that Pasonanca is one of the few remaining tracts of pristine, old-growth lowland forests in the Philippines.

"It is also a very important biodiversity and Philippine eagle refugia in the biogeographically unique western Mindanao peninsula," Ibañez told the BusinessMirror in an interview via Zoom on July 27.

Refugia (singular refugium) are locations which support isolated or relict populations of a once more widespread species.

According to Ibañez, with perhaps three to four Philippine eagle pairs inhabiting

the PaNP, the eagle couples appear to act as sources of new eaglets, which will eventually fly to and re-occupy smaller forest fragments along the peninsula, whose resident eagles could have been lost to shooting, hunting or habitat degradation.

High-quality habitat

"The PaNP appears to be a high-quality habitat for healthy eagle couples. The healthy offsprings of these fit eagle pairs, in turn, can provide a 'rescue effect' to eagle populations found in lesser quality habitats (sink population) elsewhere along the peninsula," he explained.

With PaNP playing a potentially important role in Philippine eagle and wildlife "source-and-sink" population dynamics on the Zamboanga Peninsula, its "protected status" should be strictly maintained, Ibañez pointed out.

"In order to secure the safe passage of eagles and wildlife migrating from PaNP to other forest fragments, forest corridors and stepping stones might be restored and equally protected. Lastly, shooting and hunting of apex forest predators like the Philippine eagle and ecological keystones like hornbills and warty pigs should totally stop," he added.

Biodiversity rich area

BASED on the biological profile of the PaNP, it is one of the most biologically diverse areas in the Philippines, if not in the entire Asean region.

According to the Asean Centre for Biodiversity (ACB), which implements the Asean Heritage Parks (AHP) Program as one of its flagship programs, the PaNP's contiguous block of old and secondary-growth dipterocarp forest covers almost 90 percent of the area.

"Many of the threatened and restricted-range species of the Mindanao and Eastern Visayas Endemic Bird Area have been recorded in or near to Pasonanca watershed, including records of the threatened Mindanao bleeding-heart, silvery kingfisher, Philippine leafbird and little stary flycatcher, and Zamboanga bulbul, which is confined to the protected area and subspecies from Western Mindanao and Basilan," ACB said, quoting a 2018 report of BirdLife International.

Endangered trees, diverse flora and fauna

PANP is home to the most threatened



LUSH forest vegetation with tall dipterocarps characterizes the PaNP, one of the few remaining old-growth forests in Mindanao.



A PHILIPPINE eagle, one of the world's rarest birds of prey, rests on its nest in the 17,000-hectare PaNP.



A RIVER crossing with a hanging bridge is one of the ecotourism activities at the Pasonanca Natural Park.

premium Philippine native tree species. This includes the Mindanao narek, yakal magasusu, gisok-gisok, almon, white lauan, kalunt, mayapl, and tanguile—all identified as critically endangered, or on the brink of extinction.

There is an estimated 15,000 flora species, 50 percent of which are endemic, or species that found only in the Philippines.

Around 70 percent to 80 percent of the species are flowering plants, however, 193 are "threatened."

Meanwhile, a total of 109 of the 192 endemic bird species were recorded in the PaNP.

For land mammals, 24 of the 110 endemic species, and 71 of the 208 endemic species of reptiles are in the Park.

Asean Heritage Park

HAVING been declared an Asean Heritage Park last October 31, 2022, in Bogor, Indonesia, PaNP is the 10th AHP in the Philippines and the 52nd in the region. It will be launched as an AHP on October 22.

According to the ACB, while the nomination process for the PaNP began even before the discovery of the eagle nesting

sites in 2019, the discovery boosted its candidacy, and it indicated that there is a collective effort from several communities and government authorities in conserving and protecting the precious endemic bird species and vital ecosystems.

"As the main supplier of domestic water to more than 300,000 residents, management of PaNP will ensure that these sources are properly sustained," the ACB said.

In addition, tourism activities, such as bird-watching and trekking, will boost more livelihood options among the locals.

There are two international birding tour sites in the PaNP—the Baluno Ecological Research and Training Center in Barangay Baluno, and Sitio Canucutan in Upper Pasonanca.

ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita S. Lim said that as part of the AHP, the recognized parks are expected to maintain the highest standards of managing protected areas to ensure that the very reasons they became AHPs—such as being habitats of iconic species, unique ecological features, source of ecosystem services important for the country and for Asean—will continue to exist and

be sustained.

"The ACB is, of course, ready to work with the AMS (Asean member states) and dialogue and development partners of Asean in supporting actions to maintain and improve the management effectiveness of AHPs," Lim said.

New challenges ahead

ACCORDING to the ACB, protected areas designated as AHPs benefit from the capacity-building support for their key stakeholders.

AHPs, like the 10 others in the Philippines and 52 others in the Asean, are recipients of technical assistance from a network of experts and partners, and through the implementation of research, development programs and projects facilitated by the ACB.

Domilza Campaner, the Protected Area Superintendent of PaNP, said she's both "excited" and "apprehensive" about the distinct title accorded to the PaNP.

"Finally, we are now an AHP," she told the BusinessMirror in an interview on July 26.

While she is excited by the new challenges

In protecting the PaNP, she is also apprehensive because the stakeholders, particularly the communities living in the buffer zones, may think it means tighter rules.

According to Campaner, the designation of the PaNP as an AHP compels them to be stricter in enforcing environmental laws.

Stronger protection needed

CAMPANER expressed concern that stronger protection measures is needed, especially against those who harvest forest products like rattan and other economically valuable resources found within the strict protection zone, or the "no-take zone" portion of Pasonanca.

"The problem is manageable right now. But if the community will have no alternative source of income, I am afraid of what will happen next," she said.

The PaNP's protection largely depends on the support provided by the so-called Blue Guards of the Zamboanga City Water District. But during the pandemic, the number of the 40 Blue Guards was drastically reduced to 45.

She expressed hope that the Zamboanga Water District will rehire the Blue Guards who were laid off during the pandemic, while also hoping to augment its own "Bantay Gubat" through funding support from Congress.

A potential tourist magnet in the Zamboanga Peninsula, among the tourism activities it offers, are trekking, river/ swimming, bird watching, sightseeing, filming/photo shooting and camping.

But with tourism booming, best management practice is a primary requirement, but it will be another big challenge for the protectors of Pasonanca Natural Park.



DENR unit finds transfer of Mati City's marine turtle hatchery 'appropriate'

A UNIT of the Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB) of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said it found no reason to object to the decision of the local government unit (LGU) to transfer a two-decade-old marine turtle hatchery being run and managed by a community-based group in Mati City, Davao Oriental.

Nermalie M. Lita, chief of the Wildlife Regulation Section of the DENR-BMB, said, "For sound management of the marine hatchery, the transfer of the facility from the Amihan sa Dahican to Menzi Visitor's Information Center in Dahican is deemed appropriate."

Lita's statement was in reaction to a BusinessMirror report and query on the complaints raised by members of Amihan sa Dahican-Balod sa Paglaon Inc. It forms part of the findings of the DENR, a copy of which was e-mailed to the BUSINESSMIRROR.

The statement added that the Mati LGU has the management jurisdiction over the land, hence, has the authority or jurisdiction over the allocation of the property, taking into consideration environmental and/or conservation concerns "which the LGU Mati observed with due diligence."

The DENR-BMB unit chief said the LGU conducted stakeholder meetings on the plan and properly communicated with the Amihan on the proposed relocation and construction of a new marine turtle hatchery in a better location.

Mark Bacalso, a board member of Amihan, complained that the LGU sent a demolition crew last week and started to demolish the hatchery despite ongoing talks on their stiff

opposition to the plan.

The Amihan members said the 20-year-old hatchery was dismantled allegedly because of the plan to take over their operation, including the community-based ecotourism activities that employ volunteers from the barangay and fund the operation of the hatchery.

DENR officials, led by Undersecretary Jonas R. Leones and Assistant Secretary Marcial C. Amaro, the concurrent director of the DENR-BMB, ordered an immediate investigation when sought for comment by the BusinessMirror.

The DENR-BMB unit said that the investigation established that Amihan is a duly registered organization under the Securities and Exchange Commission, and is a duly accredited nonprofit organization by the City of Mati.

Formerly known as the Amihan Sa Dahican Surf, Skim and Fisherfolks Association, it was a recipient of financial assistance for Ecotourism Development under the Integrated Coastal Resource Management Project CY 2007-12 of DENR Region XI.

It is also acknowledged as a people's organization partner in biodiversity conservation, particularly on the conservation and protection of marine turtle nests, including the operation of a marine turtle hatchery along the shoreline of Dahican, Mati.

However, the probe revealed that the Mati LGU is the lawful and rightful owner of a 3,000-square meter lot at Dahican and the access road for public use.

It was found that the current location of the marine turtle hatchery in Dahican and the observatory tower is within the foreshore area.

It added that the marine turtles lay eggs anywhere within the Dahican shoreline, and Amihan members merely transfer the eggs to the existing hatchery.

According to the DENR-BMB officials, the current location of the marine turtle hatchery is intended by the Mati City LGU to be used for public access roads, fishermen's port and for general usage of the shoreline.

The Mati City officials have already constructed a new turtle hatchery at Menzi Visitors Information Center in Dahican which is more suitable than the existing facility.

The new hatchery is along the shores of Dahican beach to protect the eggs from the vibration in the sand called rhythmic pulsation that affects marine turtle egg incubation and hatchlings emergence.

According to the DENR-BMB, the new hatchery at Menzi is guarded by the LGU and is secured, safe and away from foot traffic caused by human activities compared to the old hatchery.

"Based on the series of interviews from various key personnel from Mati, it does not intend to cease the relationship of the [LGU] and with the Amihan sa Dahican-Balod sa Paglaom Inc. as a partner in the conservation of wildlife," the DENR-BMB unit head said.

However, it was not clear who will be in charge of the operation of the new hatchery and what will happen to the volunteer workers, who act both as conservation workers and tour guides of Amihan, with the reported plan of the LGU to take over the management of the entire Dahican beach area.

Meanwhile, the existing observatory or watch tower in Amihan, Dahican, will be used by Mati LGU as a monitoring station pursuant to the Dahican Shoreline and Access Road Management Task Force Operations Manual 2023. *Jonathan L. Mayuga*



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GLOBAL BEAUTY BRAND VOWS TO REDUCE, RECYCLE

L'ORÉAL Groupe, in partnership with PCX, a registered producer responsibility organization (PRO), announced its commitment to recover, sort and recycle plastic equivalent to 100 percent of its yearly plastic footprint volume starting in 2023, going beyond the 20 percent recovery target mandated by the local government.

In line with its sustainability commitments under the L'Oréal for the Future program, L'oreal Group fully supports the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Act of 2022, a law governing the practical approach on efficient waste management, waste reduction and development of environment-friendly packaging.

The law incorporates the the responsibility of the producer throughout the products lifecycle and promotes sustainable consumption and principles of a circular economy.



Leaders of L'Oréal Philippines led by Yannick Raynaud, country managing director (6th from left) and PCX team lead by Nanette Medved-Po, PCX founder and executive chairperson (5th from right).

"L'Oréal is committed to promoting a circular economy. Our focus is to create products that reflect this aspiration

- from the design to the post-use of our products. To amplify this vision, the Group has committed to ensuring

that 100 percent of the plastics used in L'Oréal's product packaging will come from recycled or bio-based sources by 2030. As we work hard to achieve this goal, we share our full support and commitment to the implementation of the EPR Act as an effective way to reduce our impact," said L'Oréal Group Philippines managing director Yannick Raynaud.

PCX founder and executive chairperson Nanette Medved-Po said the Philippine government's efforts to address the issue on plastics, its uses and management, inspire civic groups and companies to do their part to manage plastic utilization and recycling.

"Tackling plastic waste is an important issue, and we're pleased that L'Oréal has gone above and beyond requirements to address the plastic pollution challenge in the Philippines with urgency," she added.



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TALK OF THE TOWN

Comments on "Punish violators of plastic waste law," (Editorial, 8/10/23) via www.inquirer.net:

Per Visual Capitalist, the Philippines is the biggest polluter of plastic ocean waste topping at 356k metric tons annually. This accounts for 35 percent of ocean plastic waste vs the rest of the world. Even the second most polluter—India doesn't even come close to the filthiness

of the Filipinos. In the Philippines, there's trash everywhere but Filipinos do nothing. Even if it's right in front of them, they do nothing.

mark

Punish the manufacturer. For every brand of sachet or plastic bag that goes to the street or river, the punishment shall be per sachet or plastic bag collected.

Vir_A

New biodegradable technology is needed to replace single-use plastics.

Joe Whitey

Improve the economy and all the underlying factors can be minimized or eliminated.

For one, we only see sachet packs in a third-world country since it's affordable; two, laziness instead of bringing reusable bags, we tend to buy plastics for our groceries.

Baluga



El Niño's impact on food, health, economy – experts

PARIS: The El Niño weather phenomenon is just warming up, according to scientists, potentially paving the way for higher temperatures and extreme weather events in a year that has already seen plenty of both.

The first El Niño in years began last month, according to the World Meteorological Organization.

The naturally occurring warming of temperatures in the Pacific Ocean typically lasts between nine and 12 months, and is expected to become stronger toward the end of the year.

Scientists have warned the impacts of El Niño — combined with human-induced global warming — will likely stretch beyond the weather.

Disease

Vector-borne diseases, such as malaria and dengue, have been shown to expand their range as temperatures rise.

Scientists warned that El Niño, coming in addition to already dire global warming, could make the situation worse.

"We can see from previous El Niños that we get increases and outbreaks of a wide range of vector-borne and other infectious diseases around the tropics, in the area that we know is most

affected by El Niño," Madeleine Thomson, head of climate impacts at the Wellcome Trust charity, told journalists on Thursday.

The rise stems from two effects of El Niño: unusual rainfall that increases breeding sites for transmitters such as mosquitoes, and higher temperatures that speed up transmission rates of various infectious diseases.

An El Niño in 1998 was linked to a major malaria epidemic in the Kenyan Highlands.

Health

It is difficult to calculate exactly how much El Niño contributes to extreme weather events such as wildfires.

But heat waves themselves pose a significant danger to health.

"It's sometimes named the silent killer because you don't necessarily see it as a threat," said Gregory Wellenius, head of a climate and health center at Boston University.

But heat waves, in fact, kill

more people than any other type of severe weather event."

More than 61,000 people are estimated to have died due to the heat in Europe alone last summer — when there was no El Niño.

And July 2023 has now been confirmed as the hottest month in recorded history.

Food security

"In an El Niño year, there are countries where the chances of having a bad harvest increase, for example in South and Southeast Asia," said Walter Baethgen of the International Research Institute for Climate and Society.

Last month, India, the largest rice exporter in the world, restricted its exports due to crop damage from irregular monsoon rains.

According to the researchers, such actions have the potential for dire consequences for countries dependent on exports, such as Syria and Indonesia, that could face a "triple challenge" during El Niño.

"The rice harvest in those countries may be lower than normal, the rice trade may be more difficult or less accessible in the international market, and because of that, the price of rice will be high," said Baethgen.

"This combination of factors

pretty rapidly affects the food insecurity problems," he added.

Economic growth

The Panama Canal is central to global trade routes, but last week the passageway announced that low rainfall — which meteorologists said was exacerbated by El Niño — forced operators to restrict traffic, resulting in an expected \$200 million drop in earnings.

The sidelined ships are just one example of how El Niño can hurt the global economy.

A study published in the journal Science in May estimated that past El Niños cost the global economy more than \$4 trillion in the years that followed them.

Impacts from both El Niño and global warming were "projected to cause \$84 trillion in 21st-century economic losses," it said.

However, researchers at Oxford Economics have argued against these projections, calling El Niño a "new risk but not a game changer."

The costs may remain unclear, but the scientists hope the predictability of El Niño will improve preparedness for the challenges ahead posed by a warming world.

"Preparation is much more effective than emergency responses," Wellenius said.

AFP



Southeast Asia most vulnerable to climate change, drought and floods

FOLLOWING the unprecedented heat waves simultaneously hitting a large part of Asia, Europe and the United States, the announcement that these last two months were the hottest months on record alerted everyone to the accelerating impact of climate change.

The Indian University Grants Commission (UGC) has issued guidelines to all universities that all students must study subjects such as environmental education and climate change to graduate starting from the 2023-2024 academic year. The move is not a surprise if one looks at the price of tomatoes in India, which has reached more than 200 rupees per kilo, nearly three times more when compared with last year and at a historic high, according to data from the Indian Department of Consumer Affairs. Tomatoes, potatoes and onions are the three key foods in the Indian diet. The abnormal simultaneous drought and flood in different areas of India caused havoc on tomato production.

Southeast Asia and the Indian subcontinent were identified in many climate studies as two of the most vulnerable regions to climate change. The altered agricultural production pattern witnessed in India could hit Southeast Asian countries in the near future. The region must take climate challenges more seriously.

Decarbonization is electrification

It is accepted that climate change is linked to carbon emissions, and there are global commitments to limit fossil fuel use. Though the commitment to zero emissions is not legally binding, global public awareness of the adverse impact of climate change will pressure all countries to abide by their commitments. The EU initiative to levy a carbon equalization tax on imports from countries with high emissions could start a trend of punishing countries for ignoring carbon emissions commitments.

Decarbonization challenges in Southeast Asia

Most Southeast Asian countries have committed to zero emissions by the 2060s. There is a saying in the electric power industry that "decarbonization



NEW WORLDS
(The IDSI Corner)

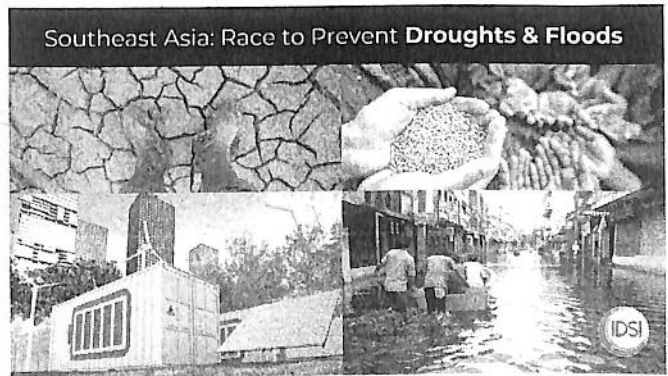
HENRY CHAN

is electrification." Looking at renewable energy-based electrification drivers is important to understand the challenges facing Southeast Asian countries. It goes without saying that renewable is a synonym for sustainable, so focusing on renewable energy base electrification is also good for a country's economy to become more sustainable in the long run.

Fossil fuels are used in three major applications: power generation, transportation and home heating. Renewables such as solar, wind and hydro are increasingly replacing natural gas and coal-based power generation in electricity production. A notable achievement of modern science is the replacement of fossil fuels by renewables in power generation, which is more efficient and cheaper today.

The best measurement of the cost of electricity generation is the levelized cost of energy (LCOE). It measures the average net present cost of electricity generation for a generating plant over its lifetime. The levelized cost of electricity generated by renewables has declined significantly in the past decade, most notably for solar panels. Almost every country can easily select good sites to produce electricity using solar and wind at \$ 50/MW or lower today, much lower than fossil fuel-based power plants. Aside from little climate change causing emissions, economics also dictate an aggressive transition to a renewable energy-driven power system. When we look at all the Southeast Asian countries that announced renewable adoption roadmaps, solar and wind are given prominent roles.

Electrification means replacing technologies or processes that use fossil fuels, like internal combustion engines (ICE) and gas boilers, with electrically powered equivalents, such as electric vehicles or heat pumps. Electric vehicles (EVs) are much more efficient than ICE-driven vehicles; the EV can use more than 80 percent of the electric energy delivered to its battery, while the ICE vehicle uses only 30 percent of the chemical energy stored in the fuel. Similarly, using the heat pump is



cheaper than using gas boilers: Using electricity for transportation and heating helps the environment and is cheaper for consumers.

Two barriers facing renewable adoption in Southeast Asia

However, two main barriers could slow down renewable adoption in Southeast Asia. The first is the reconfiguration of the electric grid, and the second is how to tackle the system transition cost from stranded assets such as coal-fired plants.

The first challenge is electric grid reconfiguration. Solar and wind-generated power is intermittent and subject to daytime irradiance and weather fluctuations. They are distributed energy resources (DER) whose capacity factor is low compared to fossil-fuel plants that can deliver power anytime in response to demand fluctuations. To incorporate solar and wind effectively into the grid, it needs supporting technologies to modify the grid, such as long-distance high-voltage direct current and alternate current transmission to send the power to faraway consumption centers once the power is produced or new energy storage systems (ESS) to store the power produced for use during nighttime or periods with little wind. And for electric vehicles to be widely adopted to replace ICE vehicles, the grid must be reconfigured to install industrial-grade charging poles.

The reconfiguration of the grid calls for more investments in transmission and distribution, a departure from the traditional investment model in power systems of focusing investment on the generating end, with transmission and distribution getting a much smaller fraction of power investment. International Energy Agency (IEA) data shows that

grid and storage investment in renewable solar and wind installations in pioneering renewable adopting countries can be close to the generating sides. Southeast Asian countries' current power pricing structure has not adapted to the shifting paradigm.

The second key barrier is the stranded asset issue. The stranded assets are assets that have suffered from an unanticipated write-down. Some Southeast Asian countries built many coal-fired power plants in the mid-2000s to mid-2010s after the region emerged from the 1998 Asian Financial Crisis to accelerate their electrification process. These plants have an operating life of as much as 40 to 50 years, and their premature retirement could affect the finances of many operators, particularly if there are existing "Take or Pay" power purchase agreements between the government and the power plant operators. The Just Energy Transition Partnership (JETP) between Indonesia and donor countries is being closely watched.

The ongoing revolution in power generation from centralized power plants to distributed power sources, passive transmission and distribution systems, and smart grids calls for a new knowledge set of power system operators. This is probably the most serious challenge facing Southeast Asian countries.

Dr. Henry Chan is an internationally recognized development economist based in Singapore. He is also a senior visiting research fellow at the Cambodia Institute for Cooperation and Peace and adjunct research fellow at the Integrated Development Studies Institute (IDSI). His primary research interest includes global economic development, Asean-China relations and the Fourth Industrial Revolution.



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The oceans are heating up as typhoons intensify

HUMAN tragedy, floods, landslides and more intense and frequent typhoons are still to come after recent climate change-driven natural disasters. How natural are they? Clearly, science shows they are the result of human activity caused by the non-stop burning of fossil fuels, causing global warming.

The Earth has become warmer since 1890, the start of the Industrial Age. June 2023 was thought to be the hottest ever in recorded history, but then July was even hotter across the globe and is the hottest in about 120,000 years. That triggers the disasters. We have to stop burning coal, oil and gas in power stations and build many more renewable energy sources for electricity.

Try putting your pet goldfish in a bowl of warm water. It will soon die. Millions of fish in the oceans die because of the warming caused by climate change and human-generated global warming. In March 2016, the highest ever recorded ocean temperature was 20.95 C. That was surpassed in July 2023, when the sea surface temperature was recorded at 20.96 C. If this continues, as it will, there will be dire consequences for the planet and the humans that live and survive on it. The well-off are causing it through wasteful lifestyles and primarily by the burning of fossil fuels like coal, gas and oil to sustain how we choose to live. Millions of poor people don't have electricity and cause no damage, but they suffer the consequences of our luxurious lifestyles. The greed for more oil profits drives nations to subsidize oil exploration, like what the UK announced recently, with politicians likely benefiting friends and cronies, of course.

This tiny blue dot in the emptiness of



REFLECTIONS

**FR. SHAY
CULLEN SSC**

a vast universe, our fragile and sensitive planet, is being changed by us humans as never before in its more than 4 billion years of existence. The warmer oceans threaten the livelihoods of millions of fisher families around the globe, especially in the Philippines. As many as 56 million people depend on fishing worldwide, and fish and seafood are the source of half of animal protein and nutrition in poor countries.

The survival of millions of people depends on a day's catch, and fish are very scarce. Warmer water drives the fish deeper for food and cooler temperatures. Besides, the minerals that fish feed on are diminishing. In the magazine *Science*, a study shows that fish populations around China and Japan are diminished by up to 35 percent. The warmer ocean temperatures have caused a 4 percent reduction in fish netted by legal fishing in recent years.

This is one reason China has aggressively claimed all of the South China Sea and the West Philippine Sea as its own and is plundering the fish stocks, depriving others by force, especially Filipinos. Recently, Chinese coast guard ships prevented a Philippine boat from delivering men and supplies to a Philippine atoll using powerful water cannons.

The warmer ocean is forcing fish to migrate north to relatively cooler waters. The poor need fish for food. According to *Our World Data*, the world produces an estimated 200 million tons of fish and sea food every year, including farmed fish. The ocean's fish are being depleted at an unprecedented rate. "It is

sobering to see this change happening so quickly," says Prof. Mike Burrows, a marine scientist in Scotland. He is a witness to the global sea warming phenomenon that threatens our survival.

The oceans are vital for the survival of planet Earth, which has about 96.5 percent of all its water. They absorb 25 percent of the carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere by industry, and the oceans grab and hold 90 percent of the excess heat created by these emissions. That's why they are warming; how much more can they take?

They are massive "carbon absorbers." Without them, we might all be dead because the oceans supply no less than 50 percent of the Earth's oxygen needed for life.

The warmer oceans are melting the arctic glaciers faster, too, and ocean levels are rising. In less than 20 years' time, beachfront property will be threatened. If you have one, sell it now.

The warmer water is bleaching and destroying the corals, which are the home and breeding grounds of thousands of species of fish and seafood. As much as 80 percent of the world's fishing grounds are beyond saving, according to some environmentalists. Exploited to the last, all are moving toward total collapse because of the overfishing. The fish stocks cannot recover.

Dr. Matt Frost, from the Plymouth Marine Lab in the UK, said, "We are putting oceans under more stress than we have done at any point in history," referring to the fact that pollution and overfishing also change the oceans.

The syndicated illegal fishing fleets with drag nets are scooping up millions of tons of fish from inside protected exclusive marine boundaries, as China is doing in the Philippines. This kind of fishing is causing worldwide fish

stocks to collapse. By 2048, at this rate of depletion, according to The World Counts website, the oceans will not be able to replenish their fish stocks. All could be gone, and fish farms would be the only source. Fish farms would be a good investment right now.

If this destruction of the oceans is not stopped with international law enforcement, the 10 billion humans on Earth by 2050 will not eat any fish. That loss of protein sources will be catastrophic. At present, the world population is 8,051,355,391 and is increasing by one birth every second. How will they feed themselves? Massive migration will result.

The hungry are now marching north from the southern colonial-exploited, impoverished countries. Thousands are traveling on foot, by bus, boat and dinghy to reach the lands of hope and prosperity. They are mostly rejected.

Exploitation under former colonial powers, corrupt governments at present and poverty are driving the poor northward. Global and ocean warming are the most dire threats to all people. These must be addressed, and governments must end dependence on fossil fuels and go for renewable energy sources non-stop. The billions in the proposed Philippine budget for confidential funds could be better spent on renewables. They are provided free by nature: wind, sun, geothermal and hydropower. We just have to harness them.

The world's political and industrial leaders have to find a conscience and a moral compass and must overcome the greed that is causing the climate crisis.

www.preda.org



S&T innovation for DRRM planning

THE Philippines is geographically situated along the Pacific Ring of Fire and the typhoon belt, making it no stranger to natural phenomena such as earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions and tropical cyclones. Using the Philippine catastrophe risk model, direct losses from typhoons and earthquakes are estimated at P177 billion every year, based on a 2020 World Bank report. Between 2015 and 2018, the average yearly spending on disaster-related response, recovery and reconstruction activities amounted to approximately P92 billion, based on WB's public expenditure review on disaster response and rehabilitation in 2020. Now, imagine investing that sum for disaster preparedness, prevention and mitigation measures instead. Much scientific research can be conducted, and technology-based applications can be developed to save lives and protect properties.

"Earthquakes do not kill people, but the collapse of buildings and other structural damage do." This is what the Department of Science and Technology-Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (DoST-Phivolcs) constantly underscores in talks on disaster risk reduction. Phivolcs is a service institute of the DoST that is principally mandated



RETHINKING
SCIENCE

**RENATO U.
SOLIDUM JR.**

to mitigate disasters that may arise from volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, tsunamis, and other related geotectonic phenomena. With their 24/7 operations, an average of 20 earthquakes are recorded per day. In the past 400 years, there have been around 100 destructive earthquakes that have killed and injured people, mostly through structural damage. Remember the Hyatt Terraces Hotel in Baguio City?

For one, the DoST-Phivolcs' "How Safe is My House?" mobile application for Android and iOS is useful in ensuring the integrity of structures, especially our own houses. Owners and occupants can determine the safety as well as vulnerability of their one- to two-story concrete hollow block (CHB) buildings to strong earthquakes. After answering 12 questions, the app will assess if the structure was built according to standard building code; otherwise, it will suggest consultations with the experts.

► **SolidumA6**

■ SOLIDUM FROM A5

S&T innovation

Developed in 2021, the mobile app was adapted from the 2014 print information material, which is a major research output in the collaborative project of DoST-Phivolcs with the National Research Institute for Earth Science and Disaster Prevention (NIED), Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Japan Science and Technology (JST), and the Association of Structural Engineers of the Philippines (ASEP). A web-based app (<https://howsafeismyhouse.phivolcs.dost.gov.ph/>) and a Filipino version in digital and print materials are also available to reach more users.

To harmonize various efforts in the four thematic pillars of disaster risk reduction and management, i.e., preparedness, prevention and mitigation, response and early recovery, and rehabilitation and recovery, and to strategically instill disaster resilience in the lives of Filipinos, concerned government agencies and organizations from the private sector revised the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Plan (NDRRMP) for 2020-2030. This highlights the need to establish more baseline data and strengthen the links among the pillars.

In 2022, two significant milestones were achieved to meet the endeavors of the NDRRMP. First is the release of NDRRMC Resolution No. 5 for the Prevention and Mitigation Cluster to lead the establishment of the DoST-Phivolcs' GeoRiskPH data warehouse, which will host hazard and exposure data from different national and local governments; and second is the development of the PlanSmart Ready to Rebuild (PSRR) automated web application. The GeoRiskPH initiative led by DoST is a multi-agency collaboration that developed an Information and Communications Technology (ICT) platform to be the government's central source of hazard and exposure information and provides analytics for risk assessment.

The DoST and DoST-Phivolcs, in collaboration with the Office of Civil Defense (OCD) and the World Bank, have developed the PSRR. These organizations, with support from the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) and the One Meralco Foundation, have rolled out the application through four regional training workshops since 2022. In the workshops, the participants generate rehabilitation and recovery plans (RRPs) for future disaster events, projecting possible financial and rehabilitation requirements, streamlining processes, and allowing both national and local governments to visualize how the local government will recover fast and build more resilient communities both before and after disasters.

Through the PSRR app, users can assess baseline data on hazards, socioeconomic profile, land use, and exposure information, among others, from the GeoRiskPH database. Through the HazardHunterPH, GeoAnalyticPH, and GeoMapperPH functions of GeoRiskPH and the pro-forma template derived from the Ready to Rebuild guidebook, the local government units can address at least one of the challenges in disaster rehabilitation and recovery planning — data gathering and access.

Using technology and innovation, the department will continue to support the nation by providing trailblazing solutions through science, technology and innovation (STI). DoST envisions that more Filipinos and other stakeholders will advocate for "How Safe is My House?" and the PlanSmart Ready to Rebuild applications to help build a resilient, unified and sustainable Philippines.

Renato U. Solidum Jr. is the secretary of the Department of Science and Technology.



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Japan introduces AI disaster management tool in PH

BY BERNADETTE E. TAMAYO

THE Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) believes that the Philippines "needs and is ready" to apply artificial intelligence (AI) in disaster management as the country is prone to natural calamities all year round.

JICA Chief Representative to the Philippines Sakamoto Takema on Friday introduced an AI-powered disaster management tool that will be piloted in selected agencies and local government units (LGUs).

Spectee Inc., a Japanese startup, launched the technology through JICA's

PPP (private-public partnership) promotion program to provide real-time information in disaster-prone countries like Japan and the Philippines.

"JICA believes that AI brings benefits to society if we use it well. The Philippines needs and is ready for this kind of technology," Sakamoto said in a speech.

"We see the potential that more Filipinos would benefit from this digital innovation from Japan, particularly in the area of disaster management," Sakamoto said.

The AI makes judgments based on huge amounts of social media information, while a human team on duty re-checks

➤ **DisasterA2**

AI IN DISASTER MANAGEMENT

This undated photo shows Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Chief Representative Takema Sakamoto. JICA and Spectee Inc., a private Japanese firm, have partnered to launch an AI disaster management tool in the Philippines. The Office of Civil Defense and the Department of the Interior and Local Government are the local partners. PHOTO FROM PNA COURTESY OF JICA PHILIPPINES



■ **DISASTER FROM A1**

Japan introduces AI

and verifies the information, JICA said in a separate statement later.

The information is then channeled through a dashboard, smartphone notifications and email alerts, JICA said. It is already being used by over 100 government organizations, including police and fire stations, as well as 90 percent of news organizations in Japan.

The technology visualizes the crisis using data from social media, climate information, river or road cameras, and people traffic among others. It has its own primary check features based on sentence and image analysis, as well as credibility scores.

"This helps discard fake news and eliminate it from the data," JICA said.

Spectee has partnered with the Office of Civil Defense (OCD) and the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) to use the AI tool as a trial in disaster prevention operations.

The OCD and some LGUs are piloting the technology to mitigate disaster risks and save more lives, JICA added.

Japanese Ambassador to Manila Koshikawa Kazuhiko said, "We have been working with Philippine authorities in the area of

natural disaster [mitigation]."

In a chance interview, he said that Spectee will be "very useful" for the Philippines. "Japan and the Philippines are very prone to natural disasters. So, together with private sector's know-how and technologies, we can save more Filipinos in case a natural disaster [occurs]."

Asked how long it will take to roll out the whole infrastructure, Koshikawa said, "I have no idea. It is up to you on the Philippine side, the media people, [and concerned] Philippine authorities how you appreciate this system."

The ambassador noted that government entities in Japan have been using Spectee already. "It's not new. It's already [being] utilized in Japan. This software

is useful."

A briefing session for Philippine media was held at the Japanese ambassador's residence to introduce the AI-powered crisis management tool.

Also present during the event were Jose Torres Jr., Philippine Information Agency (PIA) director general; Negoro Satoshi, Spectee Inc. chief operating officer; and Koshikawa.

JICA said that it has been introducing Japanese innovations to its partner countries under the JICA PPP promotion program.

This scheme allows Japanese private companies to share their ideas and innovations for solving society's problems in various sectors like agriculture, education and health, to name a few.



Republic of the Philippines
Department of Environment and Natural Resources
NATIONAL WATER RESOURCES BOARD
85 Four RA Rd., EDSA, Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines 1109

PRIMEWATER INFRASTRUCTURE CORP.,
Applicant

Case No. 23-3668

X _____ X

NOTICE OF HEARING

Applicant, an authorized operator of the waterworks system Springville Madelaine Subdivision, Barangay Molino, municipality of Bacoor, province of Cavite, applies for the renewal of Certificate of Public Convenience.

Notice is hereby given that this application will be initially heard by the Board on **29 August 2023**, hearing will start at **9:00 o'clock in the morning** at the NWRB-WUD Conference Room, 8th Floor, NIA Building, EDSA, Quezon City at which time applicant shall present its evidence.

At least fifteen (15) days prior to the scheduled hearing, applicant shall publish this notice once in a newspaper of general circulation in the province of **Cavite** and send by personal delivery or registered mail a copy of (i) the application and its attachments, and (ii) this notice, to all affected parties appearing on page 2 hereof.


Parties opposed to the granting of the application must file their written opposition supported by documentary evidence on or before the above scheduled date of hearing, furnishing a copy of the same to the applicant.

Failure on the part of any affected party to file its opposition on time and to appear at the hearing will be construed as a waiver of their right to be heard and the Board will proceed to hear and decide the application based on the evidence submitted.

Likewise, failure by the applicant to appear at the hearing shall amount to lack of interest on its part and the instant application shall be dismissed accordingly.

Witness the Honorable Executive Director of the National Water Resources Board this 20th day of July 2023.

By Authority of the Board:


Dr. SEVILLO D. DAVID, Jr., CESO III
Executive Director

Affected Parties:

The Secretary
Sangguniang Bayan
Bacoor, Cavite

The Barangay Chairman
Barangay Molino
Bacoor, Cavite

The Homeowners Assn. President
Springville Madelaine Subdivision
Barangay Molino, Bacoor, Cavite

The Administrator
Metropolitan Waterworks & Sewerage System
MWSS Compound, Katipunan Road
Balara, Quezon City.